



2014

## LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE

Georgia's Economic  
Recovery &  
Growth **MUST** include  
Employment for  
Citizens  
with Disabilities –  
GVRA is good  
for business.

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# THE SESSION BEGINS

## GVRA AT THE CAPITOL: 2014

The Georgia General Assembly reconvened for the 2014 session on January 13, with the first day being largely ceremonial. Under Georgia law, the session can last no more than 40 working days, and legislators in those 40 days will have an opportunity to fully fund GVRA and garner \$105 million in federal matching funds.

This session is expected to be among the shortest sessions in recent memory. Last year, a federal judge ordered Georgia to move its federal primary from July to May 20 to allow for at least 45 days of absentee voting by military and overseas voters. The first bill sent to the Governor this year is legislation that would make the state and partisan county primaries compatible with Georgia's new federal primary schedule. For this session, speed is the name of the game, even with the recent winter weather. It's anticipated that it may be over by mid March. The weeks that follow the start of the session will be important to determine how much funding

GVRA receives in the coming fiscal year, and a little has the potential to go a very long way.

For an additional \$8.2 million — a fraction of the total state budget — GVRA would receive \$105 million in federal matching funds. Over the last four years alone, \$92 million in federal funds *specifically earmarked* for Georgians with disabilities has been reallocated to other states ... all because the state has failed to fully fund the agency during this time.

By some estimates, fully funding GVRA would provide a major boost to the Georgia economy to the tune of \$2.1 billion.

As the session unfolds, we'll bring you updates on any bills impacting GVRA.



# Greg's Greetings

## So What's Ahead

As you all are aware, GVRA has been in transition mode for a year and a half now. A year of challenges and changes. One of the things I believe is that organizations are either moving forward or going backward, but never standing still. There really is no status quo because even if the organization isn't changing, the world around it is. And change is always a difficult thing because the future is often unclear and it causes anxiety for most of us in the midst of it. I also realize that like a bell curve there are some of you who are fully behind this change no matter where it leads, and that there are some of you who completely disagree with it and what I am trying to do. That leaves a large percentage of you who not quite sure. At times you may like it, and at times you may not like it at all. So this message is directly to those of you who aren't quite sure where GVRA is heading. And for those of you who are 100% in favor of it, I thank you for your support. And for those of you who are in complete disagreement, I understand and I thank you for hanging in there nonetheless. And to those in the middle, I'd like to give you a glimpse of where we

heading, and hopefully this may reassure you as we continue to go through this transition.

In my opinion, GVRA exists as a state agency for only one reason, and that is to provide administrative support for our programs. And each of our programs exist for their own particular reason. The VR program exists to put people with disabilities to work. BEP and GIB exist specifically to put blind people to work. Roosevelt Warm Springs and Cave Spring exist to assist VR, BEP and GIB in putting people with disabilities to work. DAS exists to process social security claims accurately and efficiently so claimants can appropriately receive support. The measure of all of our success is how well each program does in fulfilling their singular focus. Having said that, my goal and my hope for this agency and all the programs is that we accomplish all of these goals in the best and largest way possible. If we put 5,000 persons with disabilities to work last year, I want us to put 10,000 people with disabilities to work in the future. If our accuracy rate in processing SSDI claims was 95% last year, I want it to be 99% next year. Simply stated, I want us all to serve more and do better with our mission.

**Think** BIG. **Serve** MORE.

**Do** BETTER.

GVRA★

So here's the glimpse of the direction GVRA is heading. I believe that to significantly increase the numbers of persons we serve and the outcomes we desire, that we must look internally at how we operate, how we are structured, and everything we do to identify where we can change for the better. I also believe that to achieve great things, we can't do it all alone, which is why I am committed to building new strategic partnerships and strengthening old ones. I know that some of you may think this means that I am "giving away your control". I see it just the opposite.

I see it as an opportunity to force us to think in new way and to seek out new and better ways to serve our citizens with disabilities. Sometimes the greatest barrier to moving forward is the fear of taking a risk to do something different. I don't want GVRA or the programs to settle for the status quo.

Lastly, notice that I did not mention funding or resources in this glimpse. That's because I don't think change for the better comes because of money...to me it's all about attitude and commitment. So to all of you, I respect what you do and I ask you to join me in moving GVRA forward. The people we serve deserve that from us. Thank you.

Greg

Reminder: The next GVRA Board meeting is scheduled for the meeting will be Wednesday, February 12, 2014 beginning at 1:00 p.m. It will take place in the 5th floor boardroom at 2 Peachtree Street in Atlanta.

# IAWP Detergent Fundraiser

The International Association of Workforce Professionals is hosting an ongoing fundraiser through the end of this year. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go to help the homeless.

For only \$25 you can get 3.5 gallons of liquid or powder laundry detergent. You can choose between either Gain or Tide. It is a presale, and the IAWP needs the money prior to delivery.

For more information, please contact Debra Barnes-Homer or Jonelle Samuel on the 6th floor of 2 Peachtree Street.

## New Hires and Retirements

Please welcome Tammy Rhea Cannon (RWS EW2 INPATIENT UNITS), Jennifer Phillips (RWS PROCUREMENT/MATERIAL MGT), Patricia Naputi (RWS PROCUREMENT/MATERIAL MGT), Brandy Balado (RWS HOUSE-KEEPING), Frances Ancien (RWS EW2 INPATIENT UNITS) and Rhonda Dove (VR CUMMING UNIT).

Happy trails to retirees Enrique Isidro (RWS IRF PHYSICIAN SERVICES), Teresa Jean Morrow (DAS-BUDGET, PROCUREMENT, ACCTG), Barbara Crosby (VR ASSISTIVE WORK TECH REGIONS) and Jo Carol Lewis Clark (VR COLUMBUS UNIT).

# Sign Up for the Daily Update or the Newsletter

Some of you may have received this newsletter from a friend. If you'd like to receive further newsletters in your inbox or the daily update, please contact GVRA External Affairs at 404-232-1978 or at [John.Boan@gvra.ga.gov](mailto:John.Boan@gvra.ga.gov).

## Georgia Rehabilitation Association Legislative Reception



## BEP at the Capitol

**BEP**  
Business Enterprise Program  
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) would like to remind everyone who visits the State Capitol to support the licensed blind vendor manager operating the State Capitol vending located on the ground floor where the across from the Governors administrative office.

Some of the items served from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. during the legislative session include Seattle's Best Coffee, hot pretzels, hotdogs, Chick-Fil-A breakfast biscuits, lunch sandwiches and hot popcorn.

Vending products are available 24/7. This includes pre-packaged lunches, sandwiches, microwavable foods, fruit juices and sodas, pastries, chips, candies and gums.

Stop on by!



Pictured: BEP blind vendor manager Emmanuel Odumosu who operates the State Capitol snack bar.





**Disability Adjudication Services**  
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

## Employee of the Month

Below is a small excerpt from a DAS claimant. The email is in part the reason Monique Bean is this month's employee of the month:

"The purpose of this email is to express to Monique Bean's Supervisor the customer service excellence and absolute professionalism Ms. Bean exhibited in handling this situation with me.

She was courteous, pleasant, intelligent, and truly seemed concerned about my specific case (when I know she must have numerous claimants). Her professionalism was so impressive, I found it necessary to inform her supervisor of what an excellent job she is doing in the most difficult and stressful times of a person's life and how much this claimant appreciated being treated decent and respectful."



Manager Lynne Powell presents the Employee of the Month award for January 2014 to Monique Bean.

# \$2.1 Billion

**That's how much fully funding GVRA would contribute to the Georgia economy.**

That's a big impact on the Georgia economy. Not only does it account for an increase in tax revenues associated with greater statewide employment, but it also accounts for the decline in state entitlement spending associated with a larger working population.

That's big. And it's very much possible. Please share this with as many folks as possible. It's important for Georgians to realize how much the mission of GVRA can impact the state economy as a whole.



GEORGIA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

As part of an ongoing collaboration between GIB and the Georgia Academy for the Blind (GAB), a delegation from GIB visited the Blind Academy located in Macon. The purpose of the visit was to allow GIB to give GAB students and faculty an informational presentation on manufacturing and service activities conducted by blind individuals throughout the GIB facilities.

Over 30 students, faculty and staff members gathered in the schools media center for the informational presentations by the GIB delegation. The main highlight of the visit was the presentation by Daniel Collins and Habtamu Wilson, GAB class of 2013, currently machine operators at the GIB Griffin plant.

Collins and Wilson, who operate computerized sewing machines, passed around samples of products they make while explaining in detail the complex nature of their jobs.

## GIB December Activities

Both shared their triumphs and the challenges they faced being employed for the first time. They also encouraged students to pay attention to subjects like math, reading and technology. An engaging dialog followed where questions were addressed by the GIB delegation.

One of the high points of the GIB/GAB collaboration will be the opportunity for the students and faculty to visit the Griffin, Albany and Bainbridge plants. These informational visits are an ongoing collaborative effort between Vocational Rehabilitation, GAB and GIB in regards to employment options available to students transitioning from high school to the work force.



GIB visits GAB  
Fall 2013

# Employee of the Month at RWS

Oliver Lee Snelling was named December Employee of the Month at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Snelling, a Meriwether County native, has worked in the transportation department at Warm Springs since March 2003. The primary job of the transportation department is driving students to and from their work sites. The department also manages the RWS vehicle fleet keeping the cars and vans ready for staff when needed.

Coworkers nominate individuals for the employee of the month award at Warm Springs, and Snelling's nomination form emphasized his willingness to go the extra mile during preparations for the successful CARF survey in November. Snelling was asked to provide

staff training in securing wheelchairs safely in RWS vans and buses. The training was scheduled to take place after an all-staff meeting that ended later than planned. Despite being after 5 p.m., Oliver stayed in front of Georgia Hall and provided excellent training to VRU staff.

His nomination form also praised the campus tour he gave CARF surveyors. "The spirit that Oliver demonstrated in preparing for the survey and in presenting himself to staff and visitors reflected not only a genuine desire to give of himself to benefit RWS but also his commitment to our organization."

# RWS Holds Graduation Ceremony

Forty-four vocational students from all over Georgia participated in graduation ceremonies last month at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

The keynote speaker for the event was former Atlanta Braves Outfielder Marquis Grissom. A native of Atlanta, Grissom was a member of the Braves team that won the World Series over the Cleveland Indians in 1995. Grissom finished his baseball career with the San Francisco Giants in 2005 and has since been devoting his time to the Marquis Grissom Baseball Association, a charity that helps young people in underserved areas play baseball.

Grissom, who still lives in the Atlanta area, encouraged the students to work hard to achieve their dreams and never give up. After his speech, Grissom helped

distribute diplomas to RWS students who completed their preparation for new employment in their home towns.

RWS holds graduation ceremonies for its departing students twice each year to celebrate their accomplishments and to encourage them on the road to success. The next graduation ceremony at Warm Springs is scheduled for Friday, June 20.







A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCY

# A VR Success Story

Avery Pittman was referred for Vocational Rehabilitation Services by the Columbus Social Security Office. Mr. Pittman suffered from a right leg amputation and neuropathy, both of which were brought on by diabetes. Because of this, he wasn't able to return to his previous employment as a machine operator and electronic technician.

Counselor Ann Smith referred Mr. Pittman to complete a vocational evaluation to explore options of employment that would match his aptitudes, abilities and interests, while at the same time not causing further bodily harm. Ms. Smith discussed and explored various career fields with Mr. Pittman to assist him in developing a work plan goal as a customer service representative/office clerk. Both Mr. Pittman and Ms. Smith agreed that the field of customer service would allow him to utilize his sales ability and computer skills, without requiring any physical activities that he would be unable to perform.

Rehab Employment Specialist Paul Workman was instrumental in helping Mr. Pittman develop an updated resume specifically tailored to his future career goals. It showcased his work experience and work skills. Mr. Pittman was given job leads and interviewed with two different companies that offered him positions. He decided that he was only able to handle one job and accepted a job as a 911 operator at Fort Benning. He has now worked for 90 days and is enjoying his new job. He is earning a generous wage with health and wellness benefits.



**“Stay consistent. Stick with the program, and it will work for you.”**

**~ Avery Pittman**